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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Cornell graduate student Nicole Russo receives
Barbara McClintock Award**

by Joe Ogradnick

Geneva, NY: Nicole Russo, a graduate student in plant pathology at Cornell University's New York State Agricultural Experiment Station (NYSAES) in Geneva, NY, has been named the recipient of the Barbara McClintock Award from Cornell's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.

The McClintock Award honors the late Barbara McClintock, who won the Nobel Prize for work that she began as a postdoctoral plant geneticist at Cornell in the 1920s. The endowment for the award came from Dr. Robert Rabson, who enabled much novel plant physiology research through his long leadership of the U. S. Department of Energy's Energy Biosciences Division. The \$2,000 graduate student award can be used to support research or for travel to a conference.

Graduate students in any of the six plant science graduate fields - horticulture, plant biology, plant breeding, plant pathology, plant protection and crop and soil sciences - are eligible for the award.

Primary consideration is given to a graduate student's background and potential. Students must also have completed at least two years of their M.S./Ph.D. or Ph.D. program, and made unique and outstanding contributions in research and teaching.

"Nicole has truly shown excellence in her academic work and in her research. She shows great promise to be an outstanding teacher, and she has provided commendable service to her field at Cornell," said Herb Aldwinckle, Russo's major professor. "Her qualifications for the McClintock Award are impeccable."

Aldwinckle explained that Russo's area of research was formulated based on a need for apple nurseries to know whether the apple rootstock B.9 was truly resistant to a lethal disease, fire blight, before they made costly investments producing trees and marketing them to apple growers, with a subsequent high liability. "Nicole very thoroughly and conclusively showed that B.9 is in fact resistant to fire blight," he said. "She then went on to determine that the resistance was not due to the grafting process, as had been thought, but to the maturity of the rootstock's tissues. She is now interested in investigating the molecular nature of the resistance."

Aldwinckle noted that Russo's research has required use of molecular techniques as well as novel manipulation of plants and trees in the greenhouse and field. "Her results are unexpected, are of great value and due not only to her acquired knowledge but to her hard work as well. She has had to be imaginative and innovative and has had to seek out and learn new techniques from within and outside her committee's expertise. By putting these resources and skills together, and by great persistence, she has achieved success."

Russo has previously been recognized with several awards from Cornell and the American Phytopathological Society. Geneva's Department of Plant Pathology honored Russo in 2006 with the Robert M. Gilmer Award for best overall graduate student performance.

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Pictures are linked to hi-res scans



Herb Aldwinckle presents certificate for the McClintock Award to Nicole Russo.

Credit: J. Ogradnick - NYSAES, Cornell University

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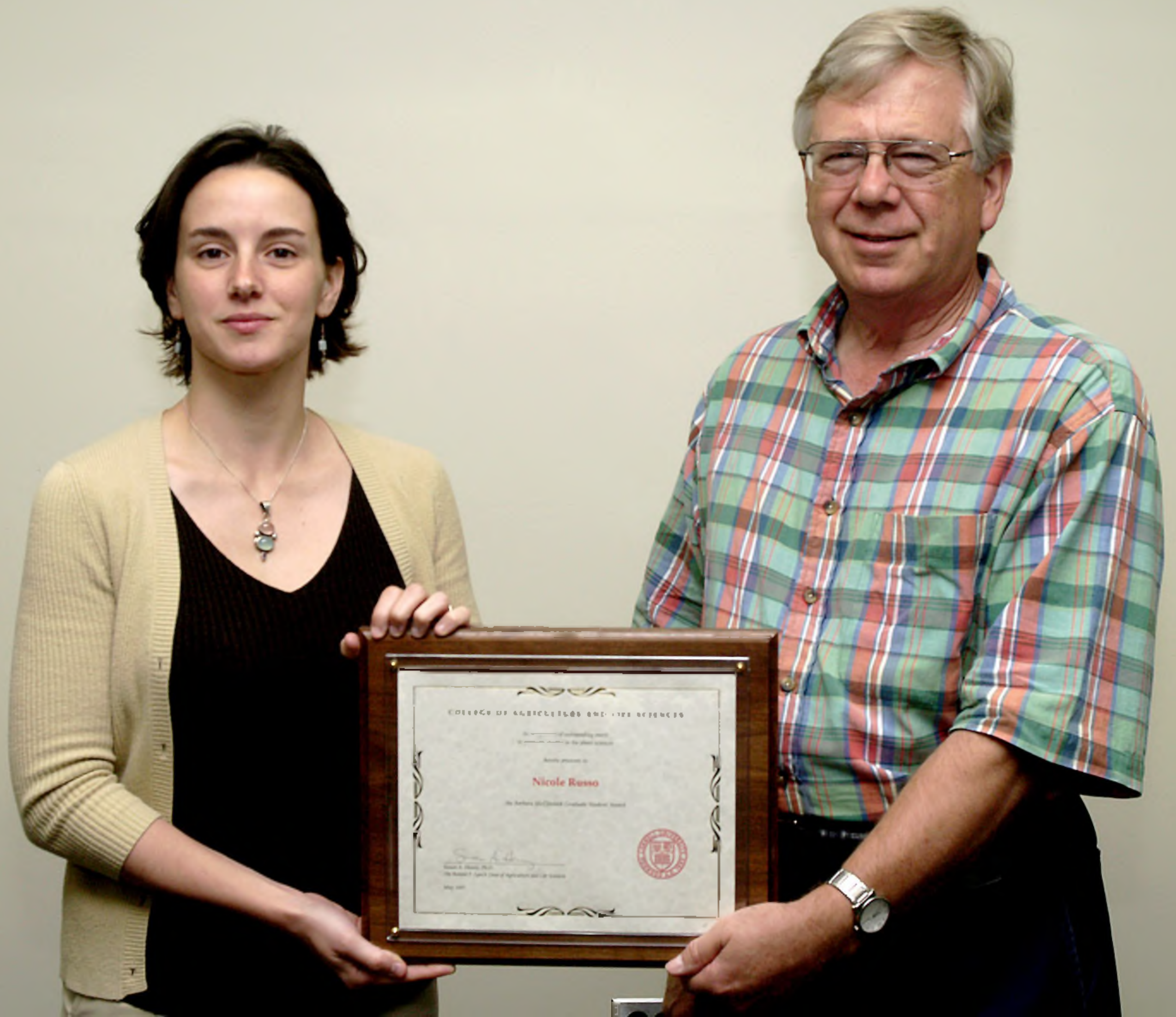
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